

HIST 498C
SUBURBIA
University of Washington
Autumn 2008
Monday, 3:30-5:20 PM
306 Smith Hall

<http://faculty.washington.edu/momara/Courses.html>

Prof. Margaret O'Mara
Department of History
Office: Smith 103G
Office Ph: (206) 685-2928
Email: momara@u.washington.edu
[replies sent during business hours, M-F]
Office Hours: Tues 2-4 PM and by appointment

This seminar explores suburban development in the United States and elsewhere around the world from the nineteenth century to present. Our readings and discussions will address the political, economic, and cultural underpinnings of suburban growth, and the social and environmental consequences of urban decentralization. We will explore many different varieties of suburbs across space and time—from upper-class enclaves to middle-class “little boxes” to immigrant communities to high-tech office parks—and we will examine the relationship of these peripheral communities to the larger and more heterogeneous cities they surround. Drawing upon scholarly literature as well as popular sources like films, fiction, and music, the seminar will examine suburbia as a place that both generated and reflected crucial political, social, and economic transformations. Readings and research assignments will also provide a closer examination of Seattle’s suburban landscape and the drivers of regional suburban growth over time.

READINGS

REQUIRED BOOKS (all in paperback; available for purchase at the Bookstore and on 24-hour reserve at Odegaard Undergraduate Library)

1. John Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture after 1940*
2. John Friedmann, *China's Urban Transition*
3. Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth Century Metropolis*
4. Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*
5. Becky Nicolaides and Andrew Wiese, *The Suburb Reader*
6. Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism*

Another essential reference work for this class is the *Chicago Manual of Style*, available at the reference of nearly all campus libraries. You are not required to buy this book, although this is a highly useful resource for any student researcher’s library.

You should arrive at class each week having read the materials listed for that date (e.g., come

to class on October 6 having read assigned excerpts from Nicolaides and Wiese).

ASSIGNMENTS

Grades for the class will be based on participation and writing.

Your participation grade is based on:

1. Active and thoughtful engagement in class discussion, reflecting completion of assigned readings (20% of total grade);
2. Writing and posting at least one substantive question or comment each week to the online discussion board (10%); and
3. Two in-class presentations on a "person or issue of the week," accompanied by a two-page written report (10% each, 20% in total).

Your writing grade consists of:

1. A research paper prospectus and bibliography (15%); and
2. A final 15-pp research paper (35%).

Details of each assignment and grading standards are at the end of this syllabus.

The success of this seminar depends on you. Your preparation, active participation, and intellectual engagement with this material and with your fellow students are what will make these hours worthwhile for all of us. **Attendance is mandatory** and your participation grade will suffer if you are not in class every week during this very short quarter. Please contact me immediately about anticipated conflicts. In addition, **I do not give extensions**. I expect you to manage your workload in a way that will allow you to submit all assignments on time.

SCHEDULE

9/29 Introductory Session

- Overview of class readings and assignments
- In-class reading and discussion
- Sign up for report topic presentations

10/6 The Emergence of Suburbia

READING: Nicolaides and Wiese, pp. 13-135

REPORT TOPICS: *Frederick Law Olmsted*
Sears Homes
First Hill

- Discussion of research strategies and resources
- How to write a research prospectus

10/13 Inclusion and Exclusion

READING: Nicolaides and Wiese, pp. 135-257

REPORT TOPICS: *Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA)*
Siedlungen (Berlin, 1920s)
Herbert Hoover's 'Better Homes' Campaign

Seattle's Central District

10/20 The Horizontal City

READING: Hise, pp. 1-152

Nicolaides and Wiese, pp. 257-272

REPORT TOPICS: *Le Corbusier*

Robert Moses

Jane Jacobs

1956 Comprehensive Plan of Seattle

10/27 Ideals and Realities

READING: Findlay, pp. 52-159, 214-264

REPORT TOPICS: *Werner Von Braun*

Brussels World's Fair of 1958

Del Webb

Lake Hills (Bellevue), Washington

- **Research paper prospectus due**

11/3 Race, Place, and Politics

READING: Kruse, pp.3-130, 234-266

REPORT TOPICS: *Baldwin Hills, California*

Shelley v. Kraemer (1948)

Proposition 13 (1978)

11/10 The Suburban Environment

READING: Rome, pp. 1-44, 87-188, 255-270

Begin reading Friedmann (we will discuss 11/17)

REPORT TOPICS: *Rachel Carson*

Oregon Senate Bill 100 (1973)

Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle (METRO)

11/17 Suburbia Present and Future

READING: Nicolaides and Wiese, pp. 379-499

Friedmann, xiii-125

REPORT TOPICS: *"New Urbanism"*

Zhongguancun Science Park (Beijing)

James Rouse

11/24 and 12/1 RESEARCH AND WRITING WEEKS (There also will not be office hours these weeks.)

12/12 Final papers due in instructor's email inbox no later than 5PM.

ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS

THE PARTICIPATION ASSIGNMENTS:

Class Discussion. In small colloquia such as this one, consistent and respectful engagement in discussion is the key to your success. To receive high marks for discussion, you must be both a thoughtful commentator and a good listener. This is discussion, not oration; I grade on quality of commentary, not quantity. An “A”-range student comes to class with an understanding of the readings and how they relate to one another, and with discussion points already in mind. She actively and consistently contributes to discussion, but she also knows when to let others speak and responds to their comments with respect. Obviously, if you are not in class you cannot show off your mastery of the material and your penetrating analysis of the issues at hand. This is particularly important given that we have a limited number of class sessions. An unexcused absence will lower your class discussion mark by one third of a letter grade.

Discussion Questions. Posting substantive and thought-provoking questions to the online discussion board (<https://catalysttools.washington.edu/gopost/board/momara/6767>) is an important component of your participation grade. It also is your opportunity to hone in on issues in the reading that you find particularly interesting and provocative, and for you and your peers to set our agenda for the day. Questions must be posted no later than **2:00PM** on the day of class in order to allow your fellow students to read them in a timely fashion. You can post as early and as often as you like during the week, but you must post at least once prior to the deadline in order to receive credit from me.

Presentation on a Report Topic. You will sign up for two of these at our first class meeting; reports must be given on different weeks. The report should be a substantive and succinct oral presentation lasting no more than seven minutes. It should tell your classmates the history of the person/place/thing, and should contextualize the topic within the issues and themes discussed in the class readings. You may prepare brief handouts or visual aids for your classmates if you feel they will add to your presentation. Please do not prepare electronic presentations, as we do not have the time or classroom equipment to run these smoothly. The report topic you choose should be presented during the week it is listed on the syllabus.

THE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Your work in this class leads up to a final paper based on original research using primary documents found in UW Libraries’ Special Collections or other local archival collections. The paper should be a historical exploration of one part of the past or present landscape of metropolitan Puget Sound, relating its story to the themes discussed in the class. This paper is an exercise in discovering local history, but it also asks you to show how our local history reflects the greater economic, environmental, social, and political changes that shaped American urban and suburban development since the nineteenth century. Your chosen area of focus could be a neighborhood or town; residential, industrial, or commercial development; agricultural area; recreational space or natural amenity; piece of infrastructure; or other element of the natural or built environment. The two written components of this project are:

The Prospectus

This proposal should contain four parts:

1. A narrative (1-1½ pages, double-spaced) that presents the subject of your research project, its significance to course themes, and your key research questions;
2. A one-half page narrative that discusses the primary sources you expect to use for this study, including specific locations of these collections;
3. A draft outline of the paper; and
4. A bibliography that lists both secondary and primary sources you expect to use in this paper. Archival sources should include specific citations regarding collection location, series number, and box numbers). All bibliographic citations should use Chicago style; points will be deducted for incomplete entries.

Note that you do not have to have already reached a research conclusion to write this prospectus; this simply explains WHAT you've decided to explore and YOUR PLAN for finding out the answers.

The Paper

This paper should be approximately 15 pages long, double-spaced, and include both footnotes and a bibliography. Notations should adhere to Chicago style. Research papers will be evaluated on the basis of:

- * clarity of argument and structure;
- * integration of local history with regional and national history;
- * effective use of a variety of primary historical documents (which could include internal administrative documents, speeches, newspaper and magazine articles, films and photographs); and
- * use of class readings as secondary sources.

The course web site has more about my grading standards and strategies for conducting successful archival research.

All of you are strongly encouraged to take advantage of campus resources and to give yourselves time to draft and redraft your papers. History Librarian Theresa Mudrock, who prepared this course's library research guide, is available to talk to you about primary and secondary resources that may help you research and write about your chosen topic. She can be reached at mudrock@u.washington.edu. The History Writing Center (<http://depts.washington.edu/histwrit/>) can be an excellent resource for feedback on style, organization, and content of your writing assignments. I strongly encourage you to make an appointment with its advisors.

A NOTE ON TIME MANAGEMENT: We will not have class the final two weeks of the quarter so that you can complete research and writing of the final paper. Don't wait until the last minute to familiarize yourself with the archives and your primary sources. You should count on visiting any archives you use at least twice: once to submit requests for files from storage, and a second time to read through requested files and take notes. I have high expectations for this paper, which should reflect extensive original research and feature well-organized writing and cogent analysis. Starting early will be crucial to the success of your project.